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ABSTRACT

Results of the University New Student Census and the Mini Census completed by 1,984 freshmen entering the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), are presented. The sex distribution of incoming freshmen was 51% male and 49% female. The majority of the sample was White (81%), while 9% were Black, 8% Asian, and 1% Hispanic. Thirty-seven percent of the students believed that the most important educational objective was learning skills directly applicable to their career goals. Nineteen percent of students reported that their most important educational objective was to learn as much as they could about several fields of study. Thirteen percent reported that deciding on a career goal was most important. Twenty-six percent strongly agreed that they expect to have a hard time adjusting to their academic work, while 36% were neutral on this item. In discussing their main reason for deciding to attend UMCP, 34% reported that UMCP offered the kind of academic program they wanted; 24% reported that they wanted to be close to home, and 14% reported that they wanted to attend an inexpensive university. Also investigated were: activities that interested students, career interests, study habits, library use, interest in educational/vocational counseling, and social/political attitudes. (Author/SW)

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A PROFILE OF INCOMING FRESHMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK, 1985

Chalmer E. Thompson and William E. Sedlacek

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SUMMARY

The University New Student Census (UNSC) and the Mini Census were completed by 1,984 freshmen entering the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP).

Fifty-one percent of the sample were male, 49% were female. Eighty-one percent of the sample were White; nine percent were Black; eight percent were Asian; and one percent were Hispanic. In terms of student residences, 71% reported that they would be living in residence halls, 23% planned to live at home and 3% were uncertain of their living arrangements for the upcoming school year.

Educational objectives were explored using the two survey forms. Results indicated that 37% of the students believed that "learning skills directly applicable to my career goals" was their most important educational objective. This was followed by 19% of students who reported that their most important educational objective was to learn as much as they can about several fields of study and thirteen percent who reported that deciding upon a career goal was most important. Twenty-six percent of the students strongly agreed that they expect to have a hard time adjusting to their academic work, while more than one-third (36%) were neutral with respect to this particular item.

In discussing their main reason for deciding to attend UMCP, 34% of students reported that UMCP offered the kind of academic program they wanted. Twenty-four percent reported that their main reason was to be close to home and 14% reported that their main reason for attending the University was because it was inexpensive.

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A PROFILE OF INCOMING FRESHMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK, 1985

The University of Maryland Counseling Center conducts an annual survey of incoming freshmen during summer orientation. The findings from these surveys provide the College Park community with a general profile of students.

Surveys were completed by 1,984 incoming freshmen in 1985. Of the 1,984, 1056 (53%) attended a two-day orientation and completed the University New Student Census (UNSC). The remaining 928 (47%) attended a one-day orientation and completed a shorter version of the UNSC, the Mini Census. All findings will be reported according to the overall sample. In addition, differences ($p < .05$) between males and females and students attending the one and two day programs will be reported.

I. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The sample was almost equally comprised of males (51%) and females (49%). Eighty-one percent were White; nine percent were Black; eight percent were Asian; and one percent were Hispanic.

Seventy-one percent of the students surveyed reported that they would be living in campus residence halls. Twenty-three percent planned to live at home and approximately three percent were uncertain of their living arrangements for the upcoming school year.

Among the overall sample, males were more likely to attend the one-day program than the overnight program when compared to females. Blacks were more likely to attend the overnight program than the one-day program when compared to other racial groups.

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II. STUDENT CONCERNS ABOUT ACADEMIC SUCCESS

When asked, "What is the main reason you decided to attend UMCP?", 34% indicated that UMCP offered the kind of academic program they wanted. Twenty-four percent reported that their main reason was to be close to home. Fourteen percent reported that their reason for attending the University was because it was inexpensive; and six percent reported attending because their friends and/or relatives had previously attended the school.

Incoming freshmen varied in terms of the academic areas they considered their weakest. They most often indicated that study habits was their weakest academic area (24%). Math was the next area students considered their weakest (21%); followed by writing (16%), science courses (12%), reading (9%), and taking exams (8%).

Males and females differed with respect to their responses to the item concerning weakest academic area. Females were more likely than males to choose math and science as their weakest academic area while males were more likely to choose reading and note-taking as their weakest academic area.

Educational objectives were explored, using the two survey forms. Results indicated that 37% of the students believed that "learning skills directly applicable to my career goals" was their most important educational objective. This was followed by 19% of students reporting that their most important educational objective was to learn as much as they can about several fields of study. Thirteen percent reported that

deciding upon a career goal was most important; while another 13% reported that becoming independent in their thinking and behavior remained an important goal. Six percent of students expressed the goal of learning to write better than they can now as most important.

When compared to male students, women tended to indicate that their one most important educational objective was to get to know different kinds of people. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to indicate that their most important educational objective was to learn to speak better.

Twenty-six percent of the students strongly agreed that they expect to have a hard time adjusting to their academic work. More than one-third (36%), however, were neutral with respect to this particular item.

Students were asked to indicate their most likely reason for remaining in school to complete their graduation requirements. Students most often indicated (27%) that "a college degree is the only way one can enter his/her chosen career," followed closely by "college graduates get better jobs "(26%). Twenty-two percent reported that their most likely reason for completing graduation requirements was to enter graduate or professional school. Another reason included the opportunity to meet and know many new and different people (7%). This reason was particularly true of women students, while male students were most likely to remain in school because their parents expected them to.

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III. NON-ACADEMIC CONCERNS OF STUDENTS

Twenty-eight percent of students believed that their social life contributed most to their development in the past year. Two percent reported that friendships contributed most to their development.

Forty-one percent of the students agreed that they will engage in some form of unorganized recreational activity on campus; 38% strongly agreed. One day attendees tended to agree that they would engage in some form of unorganized recreational activity more than overnight attendees.

When asked to indicate the activities in which they are most interested, the most common response (30%) was special interest groups (such as sports, games, or hobbies). Twenty-three percent were most interested in intramural sports, followed by 14% expressing interest in musical or dramatic organizations. Eleven percent reported an interest in student publications/communications (such as newspapers, radio stations, or yearbook), while seven percent expressed interest in political and social action groups.

Female students tended to express more interest in volunteer services and political/social action groups than male students. Males were more likely than females to express interest in intramural sports.

About 70% of incoming freshmen will be or hope to be working part-time jobs while in school. Of the students already employed, nine percent indicated that they would work 15-19 hours per week during the academic year, while 8% indicated that they would work 10-14 hours per week, with a median of 13 hours for

those who plan to work.

Students who attended the overnight program differed from students who attended the one-day program with respect to what they believed would be the hardest part of adjusting to college. Overnight program attendees were more likely than one-day program attendees to indicate the getting to meet and know other people would be the hardest part of adjusting to college. This finding leads to the possible explanation that overnight attendees may have been more invested and motivated in orientation, particularly since it provided the opportunity to meet new people. A related item suggests a similar conclusion. One-day attendees reported that they felt more a part of the student body than overnight attendees. Evidence also suggests that students who attended the overnight orientation program indicated more strongly that the University was their first choice of colleges.

IV. EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL GOALS

Findings from items common to both survey instruments suggest that freshmen possess a high degree of future orientation. A majority indicated that they think about the future (59%), while 35% did not.

Thirty-six percent of incoming freshmen agreed that they have explored alternatives to their current career goals. Thirty-three percent were neutral and 18% disagreed.

Incoming freshmen most often intended to pursue a Master's degree as their highest academic degree (37%). Thirty-two percent planned to complete schooling with a Bachelor's and 14% plan to obtain a Ph.D. or Ed.D. Seven percent hoped to eventually

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gain a medical degree.

All students were asked to list the three occupations they were currently considering as vocational goals. These goals were classified according to Holland's (1970) model of career types. These career types include Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. (See table below for summary of Holland career types).

Of the first choices given by students, 27% indicated interests in Investigative careers; 24% were interested in Realistic careers; and 16% were interested in Enterprising careers. Only 1% expressed interest in Conventional careers. Males were strongly represented in Realistic careers, while women were strongly represented in both Artistic and Social careers, according to Holland types.

Nearly 60% of all freshmen sampled perceived no foreseeable obstacles that could prevent them from attaining their first vocational goal. Twenty-four percent indicated "other" obstacles than those listed, while eight percent reported that there may be some difficulty balancing career and family responsibilities. This latter choice (i.e., balancing career and family responsibilities was indicated more frequently by women respondents than by male respondents. In effect, women expressed more concern about family issues than men.

HOLLAND TYPES	CAREER THEMES	TYPES OF OCCUPATIONS PREFERRED
Realistic	Rugged, practical, enjoys working outdoors; enjoys working with things more than ideas or people, especially with tools and large machinery	Agriculture, nature, mechanical activities construction work
Investigative	Likes working with ideas more than with people or things; enjoys solving abstract problems; creative	Design engineers, social scientists, laboratory technicians
Artistic	Artistically inclined and likes to work on activities requiring self-expression; original, creative	Artists, composers, actors, poets
Social	Social and outgoing; concerned about welfare of others; enjoys being center of groups; prefers to work with people rather than ideas or things	School superintendent, clinical or counseling psychologist
Enterprising	Great talent with words and putting to use in selling, leading, and dominating; enjoys power, status, material wealth	Salespersons, business executives, realtors, politicians
Conventional	Prefers highly structured work settings; enjoys office work and fits well into large organizations	Bank examiners, statisticians, tax experts, computer operators

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When asked how certain they are of their present vocational goal, 36% indicated that they were quite certain, followed by 24% who reported being somewhat uncertain. Fourteen percent reported having no specific goal at present, and 8% reported that they had a clearly fixed vocational goal. More women than men students indicated that they had "no specific goal at present." Men tended to have express having "clearly fixed vocational goals" more often than women.

The freshmen had decided upon their present vocational goals as follows: 32% indicated that they decided during their senior year of high school, 23% reported having decided during their junior year, and 21% responded that they had not yet decided.

V. STUDY HABITS AND LEARNING

Twenty-one percent of incoming students reported that during high school, they studied 4 - 5 hours per week, on the average. When asked how many hours per week they expected to study at UMCP, however, students tended to choose a greater number of hours for study: 24% indicated that they expected to study 13-17 hours per week on the average; 23% reported an average of 18-21 study hours and 19% indicated a 9-12 hour period for study with a median of 16 hours.

While females studied more in high school (median: males 3 hours; females 6 hours), they did not differ with respect to the time they expect to study at the University.

Students were asked to describe their usual pattern of study in terms of the percentage of time they crammed versus the

percentage of time they studied systematically. Nearly one-third of the students (31%) described their usual pattern of study as 50% crammed, 50% done systematically. This was followed by 29% who crammed 70% of the time and studied systematically 30% of the time.

In terms of usual study methods, 32% of students indicated that they usually keep up with reading assignments. Twenty-eight percent reported thta they sometimes are behind in reading assignments, while 19% believed that they almost always keep up with reading assignments.

Two items on the questionnaire refer to library use. Thirty percent of students indicated that they last checked out a book from a library one to two months ago, followed closely by 29% of the students who last checked out a book one week to a month ago. For the statement "I know how to use a library well," 45% agreed, 12% strongly agreed, and 31% remained neutral.

The majority of students indicated that they expect to learn as much out of class as they do in class (83%). More than half (53%) strongly agreed that they were eager to learn new ideas.

VI. COUNSELING ISSUES

Forty-five percent of the students agreed that they would be interested in seeking counseling regarding educational/vocational concerns. Thirty-six percent strongly agreed with this item. Different attitudes were found, however, with respect to students seeking counseling for emotional/social concerns: 32% disagreed, 11% strongly disagreed, and 41% were neutral.

Thirty-four percent of students agreed with the state-

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ment: "If I run into problems concerning school, I have someone who would listen to me to help me." This was followed by 31% who disagreed and 24% who were neutral. Thirty-nine percent agreed that they would be interested in counseling to help them study more efficiently. Thirty percent were neutral, and 19% strongly agreed.

Males showed greater levels of agreement than females on items concerning the likelihood of seeking supportive/counseling services at the University.

VII. SOCIAL-POLITICAL ATTITUDES

Two survey questions assessed social and political attitudes of students. One question pertained to how confident students felt about the social and economic health of this country today. Thirty-eight percent were neutral, while 26% were not confident.

23% believed that the economy is the most important issue to resolve, followed by 18% believing that racism is most important, and 16% believing that integrity of those with power is the most important issue today.

References

Holland, J. L. The Self-Directed Search: A guide to educational and vocational planning. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1970.

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